## Articles

### Posen

Posen 13 — Barry R. Posen, Ford International Professor of Political Science and Director of the Security Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Fellow in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, former Member of the National Security Study Group at the U.S. Department of Defense, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California-Berkeley, 2013 (“Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 92, Issue 1, January/February, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite)

The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy

Despite a decade of costly and indecisive warfare and mounting fiscal pressures, the long-standing consensus among American policymakers about U.S. grand strategy has remained remarkably intact. As the presidential campaign made clear, Republicans and Democrats may quibble over foreign policy at the margins, but they agree on the big picture: that the United States should dominate the world militarily, economically, and politically, as it has since the final years of the Cold War, a strategy of liberal hegemony The country, they hold, needs to preserve its massive lead in the global balance of power, consolidate its economic preeminence, enlarge the community of market democracies, and maintain its outsized influence in the international institutions it helped create.

To this end, the U.S. government has expanded its sprawling Cold War-era network of security commitments and military bases. It has reinforced its existing alliances, adding new members to NATO and enhancing its security agreement with Japan. In the Persian Gulf, it has sought to protect the flow of oil with a full panoply of air, sea, and land forces, a goal that consumes at least 15 percent of the U.S. defense budget. Washington has put China on a watch list, ringing it in with a network of alliances, less formal relationships, and military bases.

The United States' activism has entailed a long list of ambitious foreign policy projects. Washington has tried to rescue failing states, intervening militarily in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Libya, variously attempting to defend human rights, suppress undesirable nationalist movements, and install democratic regimes. It has also tried to contain so-called rogue states that oppose the United States, such as Iran, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, North Korea, and, to a lesser degree, Syria. After 9/11, the struggle against al Qaeda and its allies dominated the agenda, but the George W. Bush administration defined this enterprise broadly and led the country into the painful wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although the United States has long sought to discourage the spread of nuclear weapons, the prospect of nuclear-armed terrorists has added urgency to this objective, leading to constant tension with Iran and North Korea.

In pursuit of this ambitious agenda, the United States has consistently spent hundreds of billions of dollars per year on its military -- far more than the sum of the defense budgets of its friends and far more than the sum of those of its potential adversaries. It has kept that military busy: U.S. troops have spent roughly twice as many months in combat after the Cold War as they did during it. Today, roughly 180,000 U.S. soldiers remain stationed on foreign soil, not counting the tens of thousands more who have rotated through the war zones in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thousands of American and allied soldiers have lost their lives, not to mention the countless civilians caught in the crossfire.

This undisciplined, expensive, and bloody strategy has done untold harm to U.S. national security. It makes enemies almost as fast as it slays them, discourages allies from paying for their own defense, and convinces powerful states to band together and oppose Washington's plans, further raising the costs of carrying out its foreign policy. During the 1990s, these consequences were manageable because the United States enjoyed such a favorable power position and chose its wars carefully Over the last decade, however, the country's relative power has deteriorated, and policymakers have made dreadful choices concerning which wars to fight and how to fight them. What's more, the Pentagon has come to depend on continuous infusions of cash simply to retain its current force structure -- levels of spending that the Great Recession and the United States' ballooning debt have rendered unsustainable.

It is time to abandon the United States' hegemonic strategy and replace it with one of restraint. This approach would mean giving up on global reform and sticking to protecting narrow national security interests. It would mean transforming the military into a smaller force that goes to war only when it truly must. It would mean removing large numbers of U.S. troops from forward bases, creating incentives for allies to provide for their own security And because such a shift would allow the United States to spend its resources on only the most pressing international threats, it would help preserve the country's prosperity and security over the long run.

ACTION AND REACTION

The United States emerged from the Cold War as the single most powerful state in modern times, a position that its diversified and immensely productive economy supports. Although its share of world economic output will inevitably shrink as other countries catch up, the United States will continue for many years to rank as one of the top two or three economies in the world. The United States' per capita GDP stands at $48,000, more than five times as large as China's, which means that the U.S. economy can produce cutting-edge products for a steady domestic market. North America is blessed with enviable quantities of raw materials, and about 29 percent of U.S. trade flows to and from its immediate neighbors, Canada and Mexico. The fortuitous geostrategic position of the United States compounds these economic advantages. Its neighbors to the north and south possess only miniscule militaries. Vast oceans to the west and east separate it from potential rivals. And its thousands of nuclear weapons deter other countries from ever entertaining an invasion.

Ironically, however, instead of relying on these inherent advantages for its security, the United States has acted with a profound sense of insecurity, adopting an unnecessarily militarized and forward-leaning foreign policy. That strategy has generated predictable pushback. Since the 1990s, rivals have resorted to what scholars call "soft balancing" -- low-grade diplomatic opposition. China and Russia regularly use the rules of liberal international institutions to delegitimize the United States' actions. In the UN Security Council, they wielded their veto power to deny the West resolutions supporting the bombing campaign in Kosovo in 1999 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and more recently, they have slowed the effort to isolate Syria. They occasionally work together in other venues, too, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Although the Beijing-Moscow relationship is unimpressive compared with military alliances such as NATO, it's remarkable that it exists at all given the long history of border friction and hostility between the two countries. As has happened so often in history, the common threat posed by a greater power has driven unnatural partners to cooperate.

American activism has also generated harder forms of balancing. China has worked assiduously to improve its military, and Russia has sold it modern weapons, such as fighter aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, and diesel-electric submarines. Iran and North Korea, meanwhile, have pursued nuclear programs in part to neutralize the United States' overwhelming advantages in conventional fighting power. Some of this pushback would have occurred no matter what; in an anarchic global system, states acquire the allies and military power that help them look after themselves. But a country as large and as active as the United States intensifies these responses.

Such reactions will only grow stronger as emerging economies convert their wealth into military power. Even though the economic and technological capacities of China and India may never equal those of the United States, the gap is destined to narrow. China already has the potential to be a serious competitor. At the peak of the Cold War, in the mid-1970s, Soviet GDP, in terms of purchasing power parity, amounted to 57 percent of U.S. GDP. China reached 75 percent of the U.S. level in 2011, and according to the International Monetary Fund, it is projected to match it by 2017. Of course, Chinese output must support four times as many people, which limits what the country can extract for military purposes, but it still provides enough resources to hinder U.S. foreign policy Meanwhile, Russia, although a shadow of its former Soviet self, is no longer the hapless weakling it was in the 1990s. Its economy is roughly the size of the United Kingdom's or France's, it has plenty of energy resources to export, and it still produces some impressive weapons systems.

FIGHTING IDENTITY

Just as emerging powers have gotten stronger, so, too, have the small states and violent substate entities that the United States has attempted to discipline, democratize, or eliminate. Whether in Somalia, Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, or Libya, the U.S. military seems to find itself fighting enemies that prove tougher than expected. (Consider the fact that Washington spent as much in real terms on the war in Iraq as it did on the war in Vietnam, even though the Iraqi insurgents enjoyed little external support, whereas China and the Soviet Union lent major support to the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese.) Yet Washington seems unable to stay out of conflicts involving substate entities, in part because their elemental nature assaults the internationalist values that U.S. grand strategy is committed to preserving. Having trumpeted the United States' military superiority, U.S. policymakers have a hard time saying no to those who argue that the country's prestige will suffer gravely if the world's leader lets wars great and small run their course.

The enduring strength of these substate groups should give American policymakers pause, since the United States' current grand strategy entails open-ended confrontation with nationalism and other forms of identity politics that insurgents and terrorists feed off of. These forces provide the organizing energy for groups competing for power within countries (as in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq), for secessionist movements (as in Kosovo), and for terrorists who oppose the liberal world order (mainly al Qaeda). Officials in Washington, however, have acted as if they can easily undercut the power of identity through democratic processes, freedom of information, and economic development, helped along by the judicious application of military power. In fact, identity is resilient, and foreign peoples react with hostility to outsiders trying to control their lives.

The Iraq war has been a costly case in point. Officials in the Bush administration convinced themselves that a quick application of overwhelming military power would bring democracy to Iraq, produce a subsequent wave of democratization across the Arab world, marginalize al Qaeda, and secure U.S. influence in the region. Instead, Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds stoked the violence that the United States labored to suppress, and Shiite and Sunni factions fought not only each other but also the U.S. military. Today's Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad has proved neither democratic nor effective. Sunni terrorists have continued to carry out attacks. The Kurdish parts of Iraq barely acknowledge their membership in the larger state.

By now, it is clear that the United States has worn out its welcome in Afghanistan, too. The Taliban continue to resist the U.S. presence, drawing their strength largely from Pashtun nationalism, and members of the Afghan security forces have, in growing numbers, murdered U.S. and other NATO soldiers who were there to assist them. Instead of simply punishing the Taliban for their indirect role in 9/11 and hitting al Qaeda as hard as possible, true to its global agenda, the Bush administration pursued a costly and futile effort to transform Afghanistan, and the Obama administration continued it.

FRIENDS WITHOUT BENEFITS

Another problematic response to the United States' grand strategy comes from its friends: free-riding. The Cold War alliances that the country has worked so hard to maintain -- namely, NATO and the U.S. Japanese security agreement -- have provided U.S. partners in Europe and Asia with such a high level of insurance that they have been able to steadily shrink their militaries and outsource their defense to Washington. European nations have cut their military spending by roughly 15 percent in real terms since the end of the Cold War, with the exception of the United Kingdom, which will soon join the rest as it carries out its austerity policy. Depending on how one counts, Japanese defense spending has been cut, or at best has remained stable, over the past decade. The government has unwisely devoted too much spending to ground forces, even as its leaders have expressed alarm at the rise of Chinese military power -- an air, missile, and naval threat.

Although these regions have avoided major wars, the United States has had to bear more and more of the burden of keeping the peace. It now spends 4.6 percent of its GDP on defense, whereas its European NATO allies collectively spend 1.6 percent and Japan spends 1.0 percent. With their high per capita GDPS, these allies can afford to devote more money to their militaries, yet they have no incentive to do so. And so while the U.S. government considers draconian cuts in social spending to restore the United States' fiscal health, it continues to subsidize the security of Germany and Japan. This is welfare for the rich.

U.S. security guarantees also encourage plucky allies to challenge more powerful states, confident that Washington will save them in the end -- a classic case of moral hazard. This phenomenon has caused the United States to incur political costs, antagonizing powers great and small for no gain and encouraging them to seek opportunities to provoke the United States in return. So far, the United States has escaped getting sucked into unnecessary wars, although Washington dodged a bullet in Taiwan when the Democratic Progressive Party of Chen Shui-bian governed the island, from 2000 to 2008. His frequent allusions to independence, which ran counter to U.S. policy but which some Bush administration officials reportedly encouraged, unnecessarily provoked the Chinese government; had he proceeded, he would have surely triggered a dangerous crisis. Chen would never have entertained such reckless rhetoric absent the long-standing backing of the U.S. government.

The Philippines and Vietnam (the latter of which has no formal defense treaty with Washington) also seem to have figured out that they can needle China over maritime boundary disputes and then seek shelter under the U.S. umbrella when China inevitably reacts. Not only do these disputes make it harder for Washington to cooperate with Beijing on issues of global importance; they also risk roping the United States into conflicts over strategically marginal territory.

Georgia is another state that has played this game to the United States' detriment. Overly confident of Washington's affection for it, the tiny republic deliberately challenged Russia over control of the disputed region of South Ossetia in August 2008. Regardless of how exactly the fighting began, Georgia acted far too adventurously given its size, proximity to Russia, and distance from any plausible source of military help. This needless war ironically made Russia look tough and the United States unreliable.

This dynamic is at play in the Middle East, too. Although U.S. officials have communicated time and again to leaders in Jerusalem their discomfort with Israeli settlements on the territory occupied during the 1967 war, Israel regularly increases the population and dimensions of those settlements. The United States' military largess and regular affirmations of support for Israel have convinced Israeli hawks that they will suffer no consequences for ignoring U.S. advice. It takes two to make peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but the creation of humiliating facts on the ground will not bring a negotiated settlement any closer. And Israel's policies toward the Palestinians are a serious impediment to improved U.S. relations with the Arab world.

A NIMBLER STRATEGY

The United States should replace its unnecessary, ineffective, and expensive hegemonic quest with a more restrained grand strategy. Washington should not retreat into isolationism but refocus its efforts on its three biggest security challenges: preventing a powerful rival from upending the global balance of power, fighting terrorists, and limiting nuclear proliferation. These challenges are not new, but the United States must develop more carefully calculated and discriminating policies to address them.

For roughly a century, American strategists have striven to ensure that no single state dominated the giant landmass of Eurasia, since such a power could then muster the resources to threaten the United States directly. To prevent this outcome, the United States rightly went to war against Germany and Japan and contained the Soviet Union. Although China may ultimately try to assume the mantle of Eurasian hegemon, this outcome is neither imminent nor inevitable. China's economy still faces many pitfalls, and the country is surrounded by powerful states that could and would check its expansion, including India and Russia, both of which have nuclear weapons. Japan, although it underspends on defense today, is rich and technologically advanced enough to contribute to a coalition of states that could balance against China. Other maritime Asian countries, even without the United States as a backstop, could also make common cause against China. The United States should maintain the capability to assist them if need be. But it should proceed cautiously in order to ensure that its efforts do not unnecessarily threaten China and thus encourage the very ambitions Washington hopes to deter or prompt a new round of free-riding or reckless driving by others in Asia.

The United States must also defend itself against al Qaeda and any similar successor groups. Since such terrorists can threaten Americans' lives, the U.S. government should keep in place the prudent defensive measures that have helped lower the risk of attacks, such as more energetic intelligence efforts and better airport security. (A less interventionist foreign policy will help, too: it was partly the U.S. military's presence in Saudi Arabia that radicalized Osama bin Laden and his followers in the first place.) When it comes to offense, the United States must still pursue terrorists operating abroad, so that they spend their scarce resources trying to stay alive rather than plotting new attacks. It will need to continue cooperating with other vulnerable governments and help them develop their own police and military forces. Occasionally, the U.S. military will have to supplement these efforts with air strikes, drone attacks, and special operations raids.

But Washington should keep the threat in perspective. Terrorists are too weak to threaten the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, or power position. Because the threat is modest, and because trying to reform other societies by force is too costly, the United States must fight terrorism with carefully applied force, rather than through wholesale nation-building efforts such as that in Afghanistan.

Finally, a restrained grand strategy would also pay close attention to the spread of nuclear weapons, while relying less on the threat of military force to stop it. Thanks to the deterrence provided by its own massive nuclear forces, the United States faces little risk of a direct nuclear attack by another state. But Washington does need to keep nonstate actors from obtaining nuclear weapons or material. To prevent them from taking advantage of lax safeguards at nuclear facilities, the U.S. government should share best practices regarding nuclear security with other countries, even ones that it would prefer did not possess nuclear weapons in the first place. The United States does already cooperate somewhat with Pakistan on this issue, but it must stand ready to do more and ultimately to undertake such efforts with others.

The loss of a government's control over its nuclear weapons during a coup, revolution, or civil war is a far harder problem to forestall. It may be possible for U.S. forces to secure weapons in a period of instability, with the help of local actors who see the dangers for their own country if the weapons get loose. Conditions may lend themselves to a preventive military attack, to seize or disable the weapons. In some cases, however, the United States might have to make do with less sure-fire responses. It could warn those who seized the nuclear weapons in a period of upheaval that they would make themselves targets for retaliation if the weapons were ever used by terrorists. And it could better surveil international sea and air routes and more intensively monitor both its own borders for nuclear smuggling and those of the potential source countries.

These measures may seem incommensurate with the terrible toll of a nuclear blast. But the alternative strategy -- fighting preventive conventional wars against nascent nuclear powers -- is an expensive and uncertain solution to proliferation. The Obama administration's oft-repeated warning that deterrence and containment of a nuclear Iran is unacceptable makes little sense given the many ways a preventive war could go wrong and in light of the redundant deterrent capability the United States already possesses. Indeed, the more Washington relies on military force to halt proliferation, the more likely it is that countries will decide to acquire the ultimate deterrent.

A more restrained America would also have to head off nuclear arms races. In retrospect, the size, composition, doctrine, and highly alert posture of U.S. and Soviet nuclear forces during the Cold War seem unduly risky relative to the strategic problem those weapons were supposed to solve. Nuclear weapons act as potent deterrents to aggression, but significantly smaller forces than those the United States now possesses, carefully managed, should do the job. To avoid a replay of Cold War-style nuclear competition, the United States should pursue a new multilateral arms control regime that places ceilings on nuclear inventories and avoids hair-trigger force postures.

RESTRAINT IN PRACTICE

A grand strategy of restraint would narrow U.S. foreign policy to focus on those three larger objectives. What would it look like in practice? First, the United States would recast its alliances so that other countries shared actual responsibility for their own defense. NATO is the easiest case; the United States should withdraw from the military command structure and return the alliance to the primarily political organization it once was. The Europeans can decide for themselves whether they want to retain the military command structure under the auspices of the European Union or dismantle it altogether. Most U.S. troops should come home from Europe, although by mutual agreement, the United States could keep a small number of naval and air bases on the continent.

The security treaty with Japan is a more difficult problem; it needs to be renegotiated but not abandoned. As the treaty stands now, the United States shoulders most of the burden of defending Japan, and the Japanese government agrees to help. The roles should be reversed, so that Japan assumes responsibility for its own defense, with Washington offering backup. Given concerns about China's rising power, not all U.S. forces should leave the region. But the Pentagon should pare down its presence in Japan to those relevant to the most immediate military problems. All U.S. marines could be withdrawn from the country, bringing to an end the thorny negotiations about their future on the island of Okinawa. The U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force should keep the bulk of their forces stationed in and around Japan in place, but with appropriate reductions. Elsewhere in Asia, the U.S. military can cooperate with other states to ensure access to the region should future crises arise, but it should not seek new permanent bases.

The military should also reassess its commitments in the Persian Gulf: the United States should help protect states in the region against external attacks, but it cannot take responsibility for defending them against internal dissent. Washington still needs to reassure those governments that fear that a regional power such as Iran will attack them and hijack their oil wealth, since a single oil-rich hegemon in the region would no doubt be a source of mischief. The U.S. military has proved adept at preventing such an outcome in the past, as it did when it defended Saudi Arabia and repelled Saddam's forces from Kuwait in 1991. Ground forces bent on invasion make easy targets for air attacks. The aircraft and cruise missiles aboard U.S. naval forces stationed in the region could provide immediate assistance. With a little advance notice, U.S. Air Force aircraft could quickly reinforce land bases maintained by the Arab states of the Gulf, as they did during the Gulf War when the regional powers opposed to Saddams aggression prepared the way for reinforcement from the U.S. military by maintaining extra base capacity and fuel.

But U.S. soldiers no longer need to live onshore in Gulf countries, where they incite anti-Americanism and tie the U.S. government to autocratic regimes of dubious legitimacy. For example, Bahrain is suffering considerable internal unrest, which raises questions about the future viability of the United States' growing military presence there. The Iraq war proved that trying to install new regimes in Arab countries is a fool's errand; defending existing regimes facing internal rebellion will be no easier.

Under a restrained grand strategy, U.S. military forces could shrink significantly, both to save money and to send allies the message that it's time they did more for themselves. Because the Pentagon would, under this new strategy, swear off counterinsurgency, it could cut the number of ground forces in half. The navy and the air force, meanwhile, should be cut by only a quarter to a third, since their assets take a long time to produce and would still be needed for any effort to maintain the global balance of power. Naval and air forces are also well suited to solving the security problems of Asia and the Persian Gulf. Because these forces are highly mobile, only some need be present in key regions. The rest can be kept at home, as a powerful strategic reserve.

The overall size and quality of U.S. military forces should be determined by the critical contingency that they must address: the defense of key resources and allies against direct attack. Too often in the past, Washington has overused its expensive military to send messages that ought to be left to diplomats. That must change. Although the Pentagon should continue leading joint exercises with the militaries of other countries in key regions, it should stop overloading the calendar with pointless exercises the world over. Making that change would save wear and tear on troops and equipment and avoid creating the impression that the United States will solve all the world's security problems.

LETTING GO

Shifting to a more restrained global stance would yield meaningful benefits for the United States, saving lives and resources and preventing pushback, provided Washington makes deliberate and prudent moves now to prepare its allies to take on the responsibility for their own defense. Scaling down the U.S. military's presence over a decade would give partners plenty of time to fortify their own militaries and develop the political and diplomatic machinery to look after their own affairs. Gradual disengagement would also reduce the chances of creating security vacuums, which opportunistic regional powers might try to fill.

U.S. allies, of course, will do everything they can to persuade Washington to keep its current policies in place. Some will promise improvements to their military forces that they will then abandon when it is convenient. Some will claim there is nothing more they can contribute, that their domestic political and economic constraints matter more than America's. Others will try to divert the discussion to shared values and principles. Still others will hint that they will bandwagon with strong neighbors rather than balance against them. A few may even threaten to turn belligerent.

U.S. policymakers will need to remain cool in the face of such tactics and keep in mind that these wealthy allies are unlikely to surrender their sovereignty to regional powers. Indeed, history has shown that states more often balance against the powerful than bandwagon with them. As for potential adversaries, the United States can continue to deter actions that threaten its vital interests by defining those interests narrowly, stating them clearly, and maintaining enough military power to protect them.

Of course, the United States could do none of these things and instead continue on its present track, wasting resources and earning the enmity of some states and peoples while infantilizing others. Perhaps current economic and geopolitical trends will reverse themselves, and the existing strategy will leave Washington comfortably in the driver's seat, with others eager to live according to its rules. But if the U.S. debt keeps growing and power continues to shift to other countries, some future economic or political crisis could force Washington to switch course abruptly, compelling friendly and not-so-friendly countries to adapt suddenly. That seems like the more dangerous path.

### Brooks, Ikenberry, & Wohlforth

BIW 13 — Stephen G. Brooks, Associate Professor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College, former Fellow in the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale University, G. John Ikenberry, Albert G. Milbank Professor of Politics and International Affairs in the Department of Politics and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and Co-Director of the Center for International Security Studies at Princeton University, Global Eminence Scholar at Kyung Hee University (South Korea), former Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, former Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, former Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago, and William C. Wohlforth, Daniel Webster Professor in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale University, 2013 (“Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 92, Issue 1, January/February, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Academic Search Elite)

In Defense of American Engagement

Since the end of World War II, the United States has pursued a single grand strategy: deep engagement. In an effort to protect its security and prosperity, the country has promoted a liberal economic order and established close defense ties with partners in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. Its military bases cover the map, its ships patrol transit routes across the globe, and tens of thousands of its troops stand guard in allied countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea.

The details of U.S. foreign policy have differed from administration to administration, including the emphasis placed on democracy promotion and humanitarian goals, but for over 60 years, every president has agreed on the fundamental decision to remain deeply engaged in the world, even as the rationale for that strategy has shifted. During the Cold War, the United States' security commitments to Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East served primarily to prevent Soviet encroachment into the world's wealthiest and most resource-rich regions. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the aim has become to make these same regions more secure, and thus less threatening to the United States, and to use these security partnerships to foster the cooperation necessary for a stable and open international order.

Now, more than ever, Washington might be tempted to abandon this grand strategy and pull back from the world. The rise of China is chipping away at the United States' preponderance of power, a budget crisis has put defense spending on the chopping block, and two long wars have left the U.S. military and public exhausted. Indeed, even as most politicians continue to assert their commitment to global leadership, a very different view has taken hold among scholars of international relations over the past decade: that the United States should minimize its overseas military presence, shed its security ties, and give up its efforts to lead the liberal international order.

Proponents of retrenchment argue that a globally engaged grand strategy wastes money by subsidizing the defense of well-off allies and generates resentment among foreign populations and governments. A more modest posture, they contend, would put an end to allies' free-riding and defuse anti-American sentiment. Even if allies did not take over every mission the United States now performs, most of these roles have nothing to do with U.S. security and only risk entrapping the United States in unnecessary wars. In short, those in this camp maintain that pulling back would not only save blood and treasure but also make the United States more secure.

They are wrong. In making their case, advocates of retrenchment overstate the costs of the current grand strategy and understate its benefits. In fact, the budgetary savings of lowering the United States' international profile are debatable, and there is little evidence to suggest that an internationally engaged America provokes other countries to balance against it, becomes overextended, or gets dragged into unnecessary wars.

The benefits of deep engagement, on the other hand, are legion. U.S. security commitments reduce competition in key regions and act as a check against potential rivals. They help maintain an open world economy and give Washington leverage in economic negotiations. And they make it easier for the United States to secure cooperation for combating a wide range of global threats. Were the United States to cede its global leadership role, it would forgo these proven upsides while exposing itself to the unprecedented downsides of a world in which the country was less secure, prosperous, and influential.

AN AFFORDABLE STRATEGY

Many advocates of retrenchment consider the United States' assertive global posture simply too expensive. The international relations scholar Christopher Layne, for example, has warned of the country's "ballooning budget deficits" and argued that "its strategic commitments exceed the resources available to support them." Calculating the savings of switching grand strategies, however, is not so simple, because it depends on the expenditures the current strategy demands and the amount required for its replacement--numbers that are hard to pin down.

If the United States revoked all its security guarantees, brought home all its troops, shrank every branch of the military, and slashed its nuclear arsenal, it would save around $900 billion over ten years, according to Benjamin Friedman and Justin Logan of the Cato Institute. But few advocates of retrenchment endorse such a radical reduction; instead, most call for "restraint," an "offshore balancing" strategy, or an "over the horizon" military posture. The savings these approaches would yield are less clear, since they depend on which security commitments Washington would abandon outright and how much it would cost to keep the remaining ones. If retrenchment simply meant shipping foreign-based U.S. forces back to the United States, then the savings would be modest at best, since the countries hosting U.S. forces usually cover a large portion of the basing costs. And if it meant maintaining a major expeditionary capacity, then any savings would again be small, since the Pentagon would still have to pay for the expensive weaponry and equipment required for projecting power abroad.

The other side of the cost equation, the price of continued engagement, is also in flux. Although the fat defense budgets of the past decade make an easy target for advocates of retrenchment, such high levels of spending aren't needed to maintain an engaged global posture. Spending skyrocketed after 9/11, but it has already begun to fall back to earth as the United States winds down its two costly wars and trims its base level of nonwar spending. As of the fall of 2012, the Defense Department was planning for cuts of just under $500 billion over the next five years, which it maintains will not compromise national security. These reductions would lower military spending to a little less than three percent of GDP by 2017, from its current level of 4.5 percent. The Pentagon could save even more with no ill effects by reforming its procurement practices and compensation policies.

Even without major budget cuts, however, the country can afford the costs of its ambitious grand strategy. The significant increases in military spending proposed by Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate, during the 2012 presidential campaign would still have kept military spending below its current share of GDP, since spending on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would still have gone down and Romney s proposed non- war spending levels would not have kept pace with economic growth. Small wonder, then, that the case for pulling back rests more on the nonmonetary costs that the current strategy supposedly incurs.

UNBALANCED

One such alleged cost of the current grand strategy is that, in the words of the political scientist Barry Posen, it "prompts states to balance against U.S. power however they can." Yet there is no evidence that countries have banded together in anti-American alliances or tried to match the United States' military capacity on their own-- or that they will do so in the future.

Indeed, it's hard to see how the current grand strategy could generate true counterbalancing. Unlike past hegemons, the United States is geographically isolated, which means that it is far less threatening to other major states and that it faces no contiguous great-power rivals that could step up to the task of balancing against it. Moreover, any competitor would have a hard time matching the U.S. military. Not only is the United States so far ahead militarily in both quantitative and qualitative terms, but its security guarantees also give it the leverage to prevent allies from giving military technology to potential U.S. rivals. Because the United States dominates the high-end defense industry, it can trade access to its defense market for allies' agreement not to transfer key military technologies to its competitors. The embargo that the United States has convinced the EU to maintain on military sales to China since 1989 is a case in point.

If U.S. global leadership were prompting balancing, then one would expect actual examples of pushback--especially during the administration of George W. Bush, who pursued a foreign policy that seemed particularly unilateral. Yet since the Soviet Union collapsed, no major powers have tried to balance against the United States by seeking to match its military might or by assembling a formidable alliance; the prospect is simply too daunting. Instead, they have resorted to what scholars call "soft balancing," using international institutions and norms to constrain Washington. Setting aside the fact that soft balancing is a slippery concept and difficult to distinguish from everyday diplomatic competition, it is wrong to say that the practice only harms the United States. Arguably, as the global leader, the United States benefits from employing soft-balancing-style leverage more than any other country. After all, today's rules and institutions came about under its auspices and largely reflect its interests, and so they are in fact tailor-made for soft balancing by the United States itself. In 2011, for example, Washington coordinated action with several Southeast Asian states to oppose Beijing's claims in the South China Sea by pointing to established international law and norms.

Another argument for retrenchment holds that the United States will fall prey to the same fate as past hegemons and accelerate its own decline. In order to keep its ambitious strategy in place, the logic goes, the country will have to divert resources away from more productive purposes--infrastructure, education, scientific research, and so on--that are necessary to keep its economy competitive. Allies, meanwhile, can get away with lower military expenditures and grow faster than they otherwise would.

The historical evidence for this phenomenon is thin; for the most part, past superpowers lost their leadership not because they pursued hegemony but because other major powers balanced against them--a prospect that is not in the cards today. (If anything, leading states can use their position to stave off their decline.) A bigger problem with the warnings against "imperial overstretch" is that there is no reason to believe that the pursuit of global leadership saps economic growth. Instead, most studies by economists find no clear relationship between military expenditures and economic decline.

To be sure, if the United States were a dramatic outlier and spent around A quarter of its GDP on defense, as the Soviet Union did in its last decades, its growth and competitiveness would suffer. But in 2012, even as it fought a war in Afghanistan and conducted counterterrorism operations around the globe, Washington spent just 4.5 percent of GDP on defense--a relatively small fraction, historically speaking. (From 1950 to 1990, that figure averaged 7.6 percent.) Recent economic difficulties might prompt Washington to reevaluate its defense budgets and international commitments, but that does not mean that those policies caused the downturn. And any money freed up from dropping global commitments would not necessarily be spent in ways that would help the U.S. economy.

Likewise, U.S. allies' economic growth rates have nothing to do with any security subsidies they receive from Washington. The contention that lower military expenditures facilitated the rise of Japan, West Germany, and other countries dependent on U.S. defense guarantees may have seemed plausible during the last bout of declinist anxiety, in the 1980s. But these states eventually stopped climbing up the global economic ranks as their per capita wealth approached U.S. levels--just as standard models of economic growth would predict. Over the past 20 years, the United States has maintained its lead in per capita GDP over its European allies and Japan, even as those countries' defense efforts have fallen further behind. Their failure to modernize their militaries has only served to entrench the United States' dominance.

LED NOT INTO TEMPTATION

The costs of U.S. foreign policy that matter most, of course, are human lives, and critics of an expansive grand strategy worry that the United States might get dragged into unnecessary wars. Securing smaller allies, they argue, emboldens those states to take risks they would not otherwise accept, pulling the superpower sponsor into costly conflicts--a classic moral hazard problem. Concerned about the reputational costs of failing to honor the country's alliance commitments, U.S. leaders might go to war even when no national interests are at stake.

History shows, however, that great powers anticipate the danger of entrapment and structure their agreements to protect themselves from it. It is nearly impossible to find a clear case of a smaller power luring a reluctant great power into war. For decades, World War I served as the canonical example of entangling alliances supposedly drawing great powers into a fight, but an outpouring of new historical research has overturned the conventional wisdom, revealing that the war was more the result of a conscious decision on Germany's part to try to dominate Europe than a case of alliance entrapment.

If anything, alliances reduce the risk of getting pulled into a conflict. In East Asia, the regional security agreements that Washington struck after World War II were designed, in the words of the political scientist Victor Cha, to "constrain anticommunist allies in the region that might engage in aggressive behavior against adversaries that could entrap the United States in an unwanted larger war." The same logic is now at play in the U.S.Taiwanese relationship. After cross-strait tensions flared in the 1990s and the first decade of this century, U.S. officials grew concerned that their ambiguous support for Taiwan might expose them to the risk of entrapment. So the Bush administration adjusted its policy, clarifying that its goal was to not only deter China from an unprovoked attack but also deter Taiwan from unilateral moves toward independence.

For many advocates of retrenchment, the problem is that the mere possession of globe-girdling military capabilities supposedly inflates policymakers' conception of the national interest, so much so that every foreign problem begins to look like America's to solve. Critics also argue that the country's military superiority causes it to seek total solutions to security problems, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, that could be dealt with in less costly ways. Only a country that possessed such awesome military power and faced no serious geopolitical rival would fail to be satisfied with partial fixes, such as containment, and instead embark on wild schemes of democracy building, the argument goes.

Furthermore, they contend, the United States' outsized military creates a sense of obligation to do something with it even when no U.S. interests are at stake. As Madeleine Albright, then the U.S. ambassador to the UN, famously asked Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, when debating intervention in Bosnia in 1993, "What's the point of having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?"

If the U.S. military scrapped its forces and shuttered its bases, then the country would no doubt eliminate the risk of entering needless wars, having tied itself to the mast like Ulysses. But if it instead merely moved its forces over the horizon, as is more commonly proposed by advocates of retrenchment, whatever temptations there were to intervene would not disappear. The bigger problem with the idea that a forward posture distorts conceptions of the national interest, however, is that it rests on just one case: Iraq. That war is an outlier in terms of both its high costs (it accounts for some two-thirds of the casualties and budget costs of all U.S. wars since 1990) and the degree to which the United States shouldered them alone. In the Persian Gulf War and the interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya, U.S. allies bore more of the burden, controlling for the size of their economies and populations.

Besides, the Iraq war was not an inevitable consequence of pursuing the United States' existing grand strategy; many scholars and policymakers who prefer an engaged America strongly opposed the war. Likewise, continuing the current grand strategy in no way condemns the United States to more wars like it. Consider how the country, after it lost in Vietnam, waged the rest of the Cold War with proxies and highly limited interventions. Iraq has generated a similar reluctance to undertake large expeditionary operations--what the political scientist John Mueller has dubbed "the Iraq syndrome." Those contending that the United States' grand strategy ineluctably leads the country into temptation need to present much more evidence before their case can be convincing.

KEEPING THE PEACE

Of course, even if it is true that the costs of deep engagement fall far below what advocates of retrenchment claim, they would not be worth bearing unless they yielded greater benefits. In fact, they do. The most obvious benefit of the current strategy is that it reduces the risk of a dangerous conflict. The United States' security commitments deter states with aspirations to regional hegemony from contemplating expansion and dissuade U.S. partners from trying to solve security problems on their own in ways that would end up threatening other states.

Skeptics discount this benefit by arguing that U.S. security guarantees aren't necessary to prevent dangerous rivalries from erupting. They maintain that the high costs of territorial conquest and the many tools countries can use to signal their benign intentions are enough to prevent conflict. In other words, major powers could peacefully manage regional multipolarity without the American pacifier.

But that outlook is too sanguine. If Washington got out of East Asia, Japan and South Korea would likely expand their military capabilities and go nuclear, which could provoke a destabilizing reaction from China. It's worth noting that during the Cold War, both South Korea and Taiwan tried to obtain nuclear weapons; the only thing that stopped them was the United States, which used its security commitments to restrain their nuclear temptations. Similarly, were the United States to leave the Middle East, the countries currently backed by Washington--notably, Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia--might act in ways that would intensify the region's security dilemmas.

There would even be reason to worry about Europe. Although it's hard to imagine the return of great-power military competition in a post-American Europe, it's not difficult to foresee governments there refusing to pay the budgetary costs of higher military outlays and the political costs of increasing EU defense cooperation. The result might be a continent incapable of securing itself from threats on its periphery, unable to join foreign interventions on which U.S. leaders might want European help, and vulnerable to the influence of outside rising powers.

Given how easily a U.S. withdrawal from key regions could lead to dangerous competition, advocates of retrenchment tend to put forth another argument: that such rivalries wouldn't actually hurt the United States. To be sure, few doubt that the United States could survive the return of conflict among powers in Asia or the Middle East--but at what cost? Were states in one or both of these regions to start competing against one another, they would likely boost their military budgets, arm client states, and perhaps even start regional proxy wars, all of which should concern the United States, in part because its lead in military capabilities would narrow.

Greater regional insecurity could also produce cascades of nuclear proliferation as powers such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan built nuclear forces of their own. Those countries' regional competitors might then also seek nuclear arsenals. Although nuclear deterrence can promote stability between two states with the kinds of nuclear forces that the Soviet Union and the United States possessed, things get shakier when there are multiple nuclear rivals with less robust arsenals. As the number of nuclear powers increases, the probability of illicit transfers, irrational decisions, accidents, and unforeseen crises goes up.

The case for abandoning the United States' global role misses the underlying security logic of the current approach. By reassuring allies and actively managing regional relations, Washington dampens competition in the world s key areas, thereby preventing the emergence of a hothouse in which countries would grow new military capabilities. For proof that this strategy is working, one need look no further than the defense budgets of the current great powers: on average, since 1991 they have kept their military expenditures as A percentage of GDP to historic lows, and they have not attempted to match the United States' top-end military capabilities. Moreover, all of the world's most modern militaries are U.S. allies, and the United States' military lead over its potential rivals .is by many measures growing.

On top of all this, the current grand strategy acts as a hedge against the emergence regional hegemons. Some supporters of retrenchment argue that the U.S. military should keep its forces over the horizon and pass the buck to local powers to do the dangerous work of counterbalancing rising regional powers. Washington, they contend, should deploy forces abroad only when a truly credible contender for regional hegemony arises, as in the cases of Germany and Japan during World War II and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Yet there is already a potential contender for regional hegemony--China--and to balance it, the United States will need to maintain its key alliances in Asia and the military capacity to intervene there. The implication is that the United States should get out of Afghanistan and Iraq, reduce its military presence in Europe, and pivot to Asia. Yet that is exactly what the Obama administration is doing.

MILITARY DOMINANCE, ECONOMIC PREEMINENCE

Preoccupied with security issues, critics of the current grand strategy miss one of its most important benefits: sustaining an open global economy and a favorable place for the United States within it. To be sure, the sheer size of its output would guarantee the United States a major role in the global economy whatever grand strategy it adopted. Yet the country's military dominance undergirds its economic leadership. In addition to protecting the world economy from instability, its military commitments and naval superiority help secure the sea-lanes and other shipping corridors that allow trade to flow freely and cheaply. Were the United States to pull back from the world, the task of securing the global commons would get much harder. Washington would have less leverage with which it could convince countries to cooperate on economic matters and less access to the military bases throughout the world needed to keep the seas open.

A global role also lets the United States structure the world economy in ways that serve its particular economic interests. During the Cold War, Washington used its overseas security commitments to get allies to embrace the economic policies it preferred--convincing West Germany in the 1960s, for example, to take costly steps to support the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency. U.S. defense agreements work the same way today. For example, when negotiating the 2011 free-trade agreement with South Korea, U.S. officials took advantage of Seoul's desire to use the agreement as a means of tightening its security relations with Washington. As one diplomat explained to us privately, "We asked for changes in labor and environment clauses, in auto clauses, and the Koreans took it all." Why? Because they feared a failed agreement would be "a setback to the political and security relationship."

More broadly, the United States wields its security leverage to shape the overall structure of the global economy. Much of what the United States wants from the economic order is more of the same: for instance, it likes the current structure of the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund and prefers that free trade continue. Washington wins when U.S. allies favor this status quo, and one reason they are inclined to support the existing system is because they value their military alliances. Japan, to name one example, has shown interest in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Obama administration's most important free-trade initiative in the region, less because its economic interests compel it to do so than because Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda believes that his support will strengthen Japan's security ties with the United States.

The United States' geopolitical dominance also helps keep the U.S. dollar in place as the world's reserve currency, which confers enormous benefits on the country, such as a greater ability to borrow money. This is perhaps clearest with Europe: the EU'S dependence on the United States for its security precludes the EU from having the kind of political leverage to support the euro that the United States has with the dollar. As with other aspects of the global economy, the United States does not provide its leadership for free: it extracts disproportionate gains. Shirking that responsibility would place those benefits at risk.

CREATING COOPERATION

What goes for the global economy goes for other forms of international cooperation. Here, too, American leadership benefits many countries but disproportionately helps the United States. In order to counter transnational threats, such as terrorism, piracy, organized crime, climate change, and pandemics, states have to work together and take collective action. But cooperation does not come about effortlessly, especially when national interests diverge. The United States' military efforts to promote stability and its broader leadership make it easier for Washington to launch joint initiatives and shape them in ways that reflect U.S. interests. After all, cooperation is hard to come by in regions where chaos reigns, and it flourishes where leaders can anticipate lasting stability.

U.S. alliances are about security first, but they also provide the political framework and channels of communication for cooperation on nonmilitary issues. NATO, for example, has spawned new institutions, such as the Atlantic Council, a think tank, that make it easier for Americans and Europeans to talk to one another and do business. Likewise, consultations with allies in East Asia spill over into other policy issues; for example, when American diplomats travel to Seoul to manage the military alliance, they also end up discussing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Thanks to conduits such as this, the United States can use bargaining chips in one issue area to make progress in others.

The benefits of these communication channels are especially pronounced when it comes to fighting the kinds of threats that require new forms of cooperation, such as terrorism and pandemics. With its alliance system in place, the United States is in a stronger position than it would otherwise be to advance cooperation and share burdens. For example, the intelligence-sharing network within NATO, which was originally designed to gather information on the Soviet Union, has been adapted to deal with terrorism. Similarly, after a tsunami in the Indian Ocean devastated surrounding countries in 2004, Washington had a much easier time orchestrating a fast humanitarian response with Australia, India, and Japan, since their militaries were already comfortable working with one another. The operation did wonders for the United States' image in the region.

The United States' global role also has the more direct effect of facilitating the bargains among governments that get cooperation going in the first place. As the scholar Joseph Nye has written, "The American military role in deterring threats to allies, or of assuring access to a crucial resource such as oil in the Persian Gulf, means that the provision of protective force can be used in bargaining situations. Sometimes the linkage may be direct; more often it is a factor not mentioned openly but present in the back of statesmen's minds."

THE DEVIL WE KNOW

Should America come home? For many prominent scholars of international relations, the answer is yes--a view that seems even wiser in the wake of the disaster in Iraq and the Great Recession. Yet their arguments simply don't hold up. There is little evidence that the United States would save much money switching to a smaller global posture. Nor is the current strategy self-defeating: it has not provoked the formation of counterbalancing coalitions or caused the country to spend itself into economic decline. Nor will it condemn the United States to foolhardy wars in the future. What the strategy does do is help prevent the outbreak of conflict in the world's most important regions, keep the global economy humming, and make international cooperation easier. Charting a different course would threaten all these benefits.

This is not to say that the United States' current foreign policy can't be adapted to new circumstances and challenges. Washington does not need to retain every commitment at all costs, and there is nothing wrong with rejiggering its strategy in response to new opportunities or setbacks. That is what the Nixon administration did by winding down the Vietnam War and increasing the United States' reliance on regional partners to contain Soviet power, and it is what the Obama administration has been doing after the Iraq war by pivoting to Asia. These episodes of rebalancing belie the argument that a powerful and internationally engaged America cannot tailor its policies to a changing world.

A grand strategy of actively managing global security and promoting the liberal economic order has served the United States exceptionally well for the past six decades, and there is no reason to give it up now. The country's globe-spanning posture is the devil we know, and a world with a disengaged America is the devil we don't know. Were American leaders to choose retrenchment, they would in essence be running a massive experiment to test how the world would work without an engaged and liberal leading power. The results could well be disastrous.

### Mearsheimer & Walt

Mearsheimer and Walt 16 — John J. Mearsheimer, R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science and Co-Director of the Program on International Security Policy at the University of Chicago, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Cornell University, and Stephen M. Walt, Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Affairs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Contributing Editor at *Foreign Policy*, former Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California-Berkeley, 2016 (“The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 95, Issue 4, July/August, Available Online to Subscribing Institutions via Lexis-Nexis)

For the first time in recent memory, large numbers of Americans are openly questioning their country's grand strategy. An April 2016 Pew poll found that 57 percent of Americans agree that the United States should "deal with its own problems and let others deal with theirs the best they can." On the campaign trail, both the Democrat Bernie Sanders and the Republican Donald Trump found receptive audiences whenever they questioned the United States' penchant for promoting democracy, subsidizing allies' defense, and intervening militarily-leaving only the likely Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton to defend the status quo.

Americans' distaste for the prevailing grand strategy should come as no surprise, given its abysmal record over the past quarter century. In Asia, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are expanding their nuclear arsenals, and China is challenging the status quo in regional waters. In Europe, Russia has annexed Crimea, and U.S. relations with Moscow have sunk to new lows since the Cold War. U.S. forces are still fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, with no victory in sight. Despite losing most of its original leaders, al Qaeda has metastasized across the region. The Arab world has fallen into turmoil-in good part due to the United States' decisions to effect regime change in Iraq and Libya and its modest efforts to do the same in Syria-and the Islamic State, or ISIS, has emerged out of the chaos. Repeated U.S. attempts to broker Israeli-Palestinian peace have failed, leaving a two-state solution further away than ever. Meanwhile, democracy has been in retreat worldwide, and the United States' use of torture, targeted killings, and other morally dubious practices has tarnished its image as a defender of human rights and international law.

The United States does not bear sole responsibility for all these costly debacles, but it has had a hand in most of them. The setbacks are the natural consequence of the misguided grand strategy of liberal hegemony that Democrats and Republicans have pursued for years. This approach holds that the United States must use its power not only to solve global problems but also to promote a world order based on international institutions, representative governments, open markets, and respect for human rights. As "the indispensable nation," the logic goes, the United States has the right, responsibility, and wisdom to manage local politics almost everywhere. At its core, liberal hegemony is a revisionist grand strategy: instead of calling on the United States to merely uphold the balance of power in key regions, it commits American might to promoting democracy everywhere and defending human rights whenever they are threatened.

There is a better way. By pursuing a strategy of "offshore balancing," Washington would forgo ambitious efforts to remake other societies and concentrate on what really matters: pre­serving U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere and countering potential hegemons in Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Instead of policing the world, the United States would encourage other countries to take the lead in checking rising powers, intervening itself only when necessary. This does not mean abandoning the United States' position as the world's sole superpower or retreating to "Fortress America." Rather, by husbanding U.S. strength, offshore balancing would preserve U.S. primacy far into the future and safeguard liberty at home.

SETTING THE RIGHT GOALS

The United States is the luckiest great power in modern history. Other leading states have had to live with threatening adversaries in their own backyards-even the United Kingdom faced the prospect of an invasion from across the English Channel on several occasions-but for more than two centuries, the United States has not. Nor do distant powers pose much of a threat, because two giant oceans are in the way. As Jean-Jules Jusserand, the French ambassador to the United States from 1902 to 1924, once put it, "On the north, she has a weak neighbor; on the south, another weak neighbor; on the east, fish, and the west, fish." Furthermore, the United States boasts an abundance of land and natural resources and a large and energetic population, which have enabled it to develop the world's biggest economy and most capable military. It also has thousands of nuclear weapons, which makes an attack on the American homeland even less likely.

These geopolitical blessings give the United States enormous latitude for error; indeed, only a country as secure as it would have the temerity to try to remake the world in its own image. But they also allow it to remain powerful and secure without pursuing a costly and expansive grand strategy. Offshore balancing would do just that. Its principal concern would be to keep the United States as powerful as possible-ideally, the dominant state on the planet. Above all, that means main­taining hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.

Unlike isolationists, however, offshore balancers believe that there are regions outside the Western Hemisphere that are worth expending American blood and treasure to defend. Today, three other areas matter to the United States: Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf. The first two are key centers of industrial power and home to the world's other great powers, and the third produces roughly 30 percent of the world's oil.

In Europe and Northeast Asia, the chief concern is the rise of a regional hegemon that would dominate its region, much as the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. Such a state would have abundant economic clout, the ability to develop sophisticated weaponry, the potential to project power around the globe, and perhaps even the wherewithal to outspend the United States in an arms race. Such a state might even ally with countries in the Western Hemisphere and interfere close to U.S. soil. Thus, the United States' principal aim in Europe and Northeast Asia should be to maintain the regional balance of power so that the most powerful state in each region-for now, Russia and China, respectively-remains too worried about its neighbors to roam into the Western Hemisphere. In the Gulf, meanwhile, the United States has an interest in blocking the rise of a hegemon that could interfere with the flow of oil from that region, thereby damaging the world economy and threatening U.S. prosperity.

Offshore balancing is a realist grand strategy, and its aims are limited. Promoting peace, although desirable, is not among them. This is not to say that Washington should welcome conflict anywhere in the world, or that it cannot use diplomatic or economic means to discourage war. But it should not commit U.S. military forces for that purpose alone. Nor is it a goal of offshore balancing to halt genocides, such as the one that befell Rwanda in 1994. Adopting this strategy would not preclude such operations, however, provided the need is clear, the mission is feasible, and U.S. leaders are confident that intervention will not make matters worse.

HOW WOULD IT WORK?

Under offshore balancing, the United States would calibrate its military posture according to the distribution of power in the three key regions. If there is no potential hegemon in sight in Europe, Northeast Asia, or the Gulf, then there is no reason to deploy ground or air forces there and little need for a large military establishment at home. And because it takes many years for any country to acquire the capacity to dominate its region, Washington would see it coming and have time to respond.

In that event, the United States should turn to regional forces as the first line of defense, letting them uphold the balance of power in their own neighborhood. Although Washington could provide assistance to allies and pledge to support them if they were in danger of being conquered, it should refrain from deploying large numbers of U.S. forces abroad. It may occasionally make sense to keep certain assets overseas, such as small military contingents, intelligence-gathering facilities, or prepositioned equipment, but in general, Washington should pass the buck to regional powers, as they have a far greater interest in preventing any state from dominating them.

If those powers cannot contain a potential hegemon on their own, however, the United States must help get the job done, deploying enough firepower to the region to shift the balance in its favor. Sometimes, that may mean sending in forces before war breaks out. During the Cold War, for example, the United States kept large numbers of ground and air forces in Europe out of the belief that Western European countries could not contain the Soviet Union on their own. At other times, the United States might wait to intervene after a war starts, if one side seems likely to emerge as a regional hegemon. Such was the case during both world wars: the United States came in only after Germany seemed likely to dominate Europe.

In essence, the aim is to remain offshore as long as possible, while recognizing that it is sometimes necessary to come onshore. If that happens, however, the United States should make its allies do as much of the heavy lifting as possible and remove its own forces as soon as it can.

Offshore balancing has many virtues. By limiting the areas the U.S. military was committed to defending and forcing other states to pull their own weight, it would reduce the resources Washington must devote to defense, allow for greater investment and consumption at home, and put fewer American lives in harm's way. Today, allies routinely free-ride on American protection, a problem that has only grown since the Cold War ended. Within NATO, for example, the United States accounts for 46 percent of the alliance's aggregate GDP yet contributes about 75 percent of its military spending. As the political scientist Barry Posen has quipped, "This is welfare for the rich."

Offshore balancing would also reduce the risk of terrorism. Liberal hegemony commits the United States to spreading democracy in unfamiliar places, which sometimes requires military occupation and always involves interfering with local political arrangements. Such efforts invariably foster nationalist resentment, and because the opponents are too weak to confront the United States directly, they sometimes turn to terrorism. (It is worth remembering that Osama bin Laden was motivated in good part by the presence of U.S. troops in his homeland of Saudi Arabia.) In addition to inspiring terrorists, liberal hegemony facilitates their operations: using regime change to spread American values undermines local institutions and creates ungoverned spaces where violent extremists can flourish.

Offshore balancing would alleviate this problem by eschewing social engineering and minimizing the United States' military foot­print. U.S. troops would be stationed on foreign soil only when a country was in a vital region and threatened by a would-be hegemon. In that case, the potential victim would view the United States as a savior rather than an occupier. And once the threat had been dealt with, U.S. military forces could go back over the horizon and not stay behind to meddle in local politics. By respecting the sovereignty of other states, offshore balancing would be less likely to foster anti-American terrorism.

A REASSURING HISTORY

Offshore balancing may seem like a radical strategy today, but it provided the guiding logic of U.S. foreign policy for many decades and served the country well. During the nineteenth century, the United States was preoccupied with expanding across North America, building a powerful state, and establishing hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. After it completed these tasks at the end of the century, it soon became interested in preserving the balance of power in Europe and Northeast Asia. Nonetheless, it let the great powers in those regions check one another, intervening militarily only when the balance of power broke down, as during both world wars.

During the Cold War, the United States had no choice but to go onshore in Europe and Northeast Asia, as its allies in those regions could not contain the Soviet Union by themselves. So Washington forged alliances and stationed military forces in both regions, and it fought the Korean War to contain Soviet influence in Northeast Asia.

In the Persian Gulf, however, the United States stayed offshore, letting the United Kingdom take the lead in preventing any state from dominating that oil-rich region. After the British announced their withdrawal from the Gulf in 1968, the United States turned to the shah of Iran and the Saudi monarchy to do the job. When the shah fell in 1979, the Carter administration began building the Rapid Deployment Force, an offshore military capability designed to prevent Iran or the Soviet Union from dominating the region. The Reagan administration aided Iraq during that country's 1980-88 war with Iran for similar reasons. The U.S. military stayed offshore until 1990, when Saddam Hussein's seizure of Kuwait threatened to enhance Iraq's power and place Saudi Arabia and other Gulf oil producers at risk. To restore the regional balance of power, the George H. W. Bush admin­istration sent an expeditionary force to liberate Kuwait and smash Saddam's military machine.

For nearly a century, in short, offshore balancing prevented the emergence of dangerous regional hegemons and pre­served a global balance of power that enhanced American security. Tellingly, when U.S. policymakers deviated from that strategy-as they did in Vietnam, where the United States had no vital interests-the result was a costly failure.

Events since the end of the Cold War teach the same lesson. In Europe, once the Soviet Union collapsed, the region no longer had a dominant power. The United States should have steadily reduced its military presence, cultivated amicable relations with Russia, and turned European security over to the Europeans. Instead, it expanded NATO and ignored Russian interests, helping spark the conflict over Ukraine and driving Moscow closer to China.

In the Middle East, likewise, the United States should have moved back offshore after the Gulf War and let Iran and Iraq balance each other. Instead, the Clinton administration adopted the policy of "dual containment," which required keeping ground and air forces in Saudi Arabia to check Iran and Iraq simultaneously. The George W. Bush administration then adopted an even more ambitious strategy, dubbed "regional transformation," which produced costly failures in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Obama administration repeated the error when it helped topple Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya and when it exacerbated the chaos in Syria by insisting that Bashar al-Assad "must go" and backing some of his opponents. Abandoning offshore balancing after the Cold War has been a recipe for failure.

HEGEMONY'S HOLLOW HOPES

Defenders of liberal hegemony marshal a number of unpersuasive arguments to make their case. One familiar claim is that only vigorous U.S. leadership can keep order around the globe. But global leadership is not an end in itself; it is desirable only insofar as it benefits the United States directly.

One might further argue that U.S. leadership is necessary to overcome the collective-action problem of local actors failing to balance against a potential hegemon. Offshore balancing recognizes this danger, however, and calls for Washington to step in if needed. Nor does it prohibit Washington from giving friendly states in the key regions advice or material aid.

Other defenders of liberal hegemony argue that U.S. leadership is necessary to deal with new, transnational threats that arise from failed states, terrorism, criminal networks, refugee flows, and the like. Not only do the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans offer inadequate protection against these dangers, they claim, but modern military technology also makes it easier for the United States to project power around the world and address them. Today's "global village," in short, is more dan­gerous yet easier to manage.

This view exaggerates these threats and overstates Washington's ability to eliminate them. Crime, terrorism, and similar problems can be a nuisance, but they are hardly existential threats and rarely lend themselves to military solutions. Indeed, constant interference in the affairs of other states-and especially repeated military interventions-generates local resentment and fosters corruption, thereby making these transnational dangers worse. The long-term solution to the problems can only be competent local governance, not heavy-handed U.S. efforts to police the world.

Nor is policing the world as cheap as defenders of liberal hegemony contend, either in dollars spent or in lives lost. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq cost between $4 trillion and $6 trillion and killed nearly 7,000 U.S. soldiers and wounded more than 50,000. Veterans of these conflicts exhibit high rates of depression and suicide, yet the United States has little to show for their sacrifices.

Defenders of the status quo also fear that offshore balancing would allow other states to replace the United States at the pinnacle of global power. On the contrary, the strategy would prolong the country's domi­nance by refocusing its efforts on core goals. Unlike liberal hegemony, offshore balancing avoids squandering resources on costly and counterproductive crusades, which would allow the government to invest more in the long-term ingredients of power and prosperity: education, infrastructure, and research and development. Remember, the United States became a great power by staying out of foreign wars and building a world-class economy, which is the same strategy China has pursued over the past three decades. Meanwhile, the United States has wasted trillions of dollars and put its long-term primacy at risk.

Another argument holds that the U.S. military must garrison the world to keep the peace and preserve an open world economy. Retrenchment, the logic goes, would renew great-power competition, invite ruinous economic rivalries, and eventually spark a major war from which the United States could not remain aloof. Better to keep playing global policeman than risk a repeat of the 1930s.

Such fears are unconvincing. For starters, this argument assumes that deeper U.S. engagement in Europe would have prevented World War II, a claim hard to square with Adolf Hitler's unshakable desire for war. Regional conflicts will sometimes occur no matter what Washington does, but it need not get involved unless vital U.S. interests are at stake. Indeed, the United States has sometimes stayed out of regional conflicts-such as the Russo-Japanese War, the Iran-Iraq War, and the current war in Ukraine-belying the claim that it inevitably gets dragged in. And if the country is forced to fight another great power, better to arrive late and let other countries bear the brunt of the costs. As the last major power to enter both world wars, the United States emerged stronger from each for having waited.

Furthermore, recent history casts doubt on the claim that U.S. leadership preserves peace. Over the past 25 years, Washington has caused or supported several wars in the Middle East and fueled minor conflicts elsewhere. If liberal hegemony is supposed to enhance global stability, it has done a poor job.

Nor has the strategy produced much in the way of economic benefits. Given its protected position in the Western Hemisphere, the United States is free to trade and invest wherever profitable opportu­nities exist. Because all countries have a shared interest in such activity, Washington does not need to play global policeman in order to remain economically engaged with others. In fact, the U.S. economy would be in better shape today if the government were not spending so much money trying to run the world.

Proponents of liberal hegemony also claim that the United States must remain committed all over the world to prevent nuclear proliferation. If it reduces its role in key regions or withdraws entirely, the argument runs, countries accustomed to U.S. protection will have no choice but to protect themselves by obtaining nuclear weapons.

No grand strategy is likely to prove wholly successful at preventing proliferation, but offshore balancing would do a better job than liberal hegemony. After all, that strategy failed to stop India and Pakistan from ramping up their nuclear capabilities, North Korea from becoming the newest member of the nuclear club, and Iran from making major progress with its nuclear program. Countries usually seek the bomb because they fear being attacked, and U.S. efforts at regime change only heighten such concerns. By eschewing regime change and reducing the United States' military footprint, offshore balancing would give potential proliferators less reason to go nuclear.

Moreover, military action cannot prevent a determined country from eventually obtaining nuclear weapons; it can only buy time. The recent deal with Iran serves as a reminder that coordinated multi­lateral pressure and tough economic sanctions are a better way to discourage proliferation than preventive war or regime change.

To be sure, if the United States did scale back its security guarantees, a few vulnerable states might seek their own nuclear deterrents. That outcome is not desirable, but all-out efforts to prevent it would almost certainly be costly and probably be unsuccessful. Besides, the down­sides may not be as grave as pessimists fear. Getting the bomb does not transform weak countries into great powers or enable them to blackmail rival states. Ten states have crossed the nuclear threshold since 1945, and the world has not turned upside down. Nuclear proliferation will remain a concern no matter what the United States does, but offshore balancing provides the best strategy for dealing with it.

THE DEMOCRACY DELUSION

Other critics reject offshore balancing because they believe the United States has a moral and strategic imperative to promote freedom and protect human rights. As they see it, spreading democracy will largely rid the world of war and atrocities, keeping the United States secure and alleviating suffering.

No one knows if a world composed solely of liberal democracies would in fact prove peaceful, but spreading democracy at the point of a gun rarely works, and fledgling democracies are especially prone to conflict. Instead of promoting peace, the United States just ends up fighting endless wars. Even worse, force-feeding liberal values abroad can compromise them at home. The global war on terrorism and the related effort to implant democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq have led to tortured prisoners, targeted killings, and vast electronic surveillance of U.S. citizens.

Some defenders of liberal hegemony hold that a subtler version of the strategy could avoid the sorts of disasters that occurred in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. They are deluding themselves. Democracy promotion requires large-scale social engineering in foreign societies that Americans understand poorly, which helps explain why Washing­ton's efforts usually fail. Dismantling and replacing existing political institutions inevitably creates winners and losers, and the latter often take up arms in opposition. When that happens, U.S. officials, believing their country's credibility is now at stake, are tempted to use the United States' awesome military might to fix the problem, thus drawing the country into more conflicts.

If the American people want to encourage the spread of liberal democracy, the best way to do so is to set a good example. Other countries will more likely emulate the United States if they see it as a just, prosperous, and open society. And that means doing more to improve conditions at home and less to manipulate politics abroad.

THE PROBLEMATIC PACIFIER

Then there are those who believe that Washington should reject liberal hegemony but keep sizable U.S. forces in Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf solely to prevent trouble from breaking out. This low-cost insurance policy, they argue, would save lives and money in the long run, because the United States wouldn't have to ride to the rescue after a conflict broke out. This approach-sometimes called "selective engagement"-sounds appealing but would not work either.

For starters, it would likely revert back to liberal hegemony. Once committed to preserving peace in key regions, U.S. leaders would be sorely tempted to spread democracy, too, based on the widespread belief that democracies don't fight one another. This was the main rationale for expanding NATO after the Cold War, with the stated goal of "a Europe whole and free." In the real world, the line separating selective engagement from liberal hegemony is easily erased.

Advocates of selective engagement also assume that the mere presence of U.S. forces in various regions will guarantee peace, and so Americans need not worry about being dragged into distant conflicts. In other words, extending security commitments far and wide poses few risks, because they will never have to be honored.

But this assumption is overly optimistic: allies may act recklessly, and the United States may provoke conflicts itself. Indeed, in Europe, the American pacifier failed to prevent the Balkan wars of the 1990s, the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, and the current conflict in Ukraine. In the Middle East, Washington is largely responsible for several recent wars. And in the South China Sea, conflict is now a real possibility despite the U.S. Navy's substantial regional role. Stationing U.S. forces around the world does not automatically ensure peace.

Nor does selective engagement address the problem of buck-passing. Consider that the United Kingdom is now withdrawing its army from continental Europe, at a time when NATO faces what it considers a growing threat from Russia. Once again, Washington is expected to deal with the problem, even though peace in Europe should matter far more to the region's own powers.

THE STRATEGY IN ACTION

What would offshore balancing look like in today's world? The good news is that it is hard to foresee a serious challenge to American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, and for now, no potential hegemon lurks in Europe or the Persian Gulf. Now for the bad news: if China continues its impressive rise, it is likely to seek hegemony in Asia. The United States should undertake a major effort to prevent it from succeeding.

Ideally, Washington would rely on local powers to contain China, but that strategy might not work. Not only is China likely to be much more powerful than its neighbors, but these states are also located far from one another, making it harder to form an effective balancing coalition. The United States will have to coordinate their efforts and may have to throw its considerable weight behind them. In Asia, the United States may indeed be the indispensable nation.

In Europe, the United States should end its military presence and turn NATO over to the Europeans. There is no good reason to keep U.S. forces in Europe, as no country there has the capability to dominate that region. The top con­tenders, Germany and Russia, will both lose relative power as their populations shrink in size, and no other potential hegemon is in sight. Admittedly, leaving European security to the Europeans could increase the potential for trouble there. If a conflict did arise, however, it would not threaten vital U.S. interests. Thus, there is no reason for the United States to spend billions of dollars each year (and pledge its own citizens' lives) to prevent one.

In the Gulf, the United States should return to the offshore-balancing strategy that served it so well until the advent of dual contain­ment. No local power is now in a position to dominate the region, so the United States can move most of its forces back over the horizon.

With respect to ISIS, the United States should let the regional powers deal with that group and limit its own efforts to providing arms, intelligence, and military training. ISIS represents a serious threat to them but a minor problem for the United States, and the only long-term solution to it is better local institutions, something Washington cannot provide.

In Syria, the United States should let Russia take the lead. A Syria stabilized under Assad's control, or divided into competing ministates, would pose little danger to U.S. interests. Both Democratic and Republican presidents have a rich history of working with the Assad regime, and a divided and weak Syria would not threaten the regional balance of power. If the civil war continues, it will be largely Moscow's problem, although Washington should be willing to help broker a political settlement.

For now, the United States should pursue better relations with Iran. It is not in Washington's interest for Tehran to abandon the nuclear agreement and race for the bomb, an outcome that would become more likely if it feared a U.S. attack-hence the rationale for mending fences. Moreover, as its ambitions grow, China will want allies in the Gulf, and Iran will likely top its list. (In a harbinger of things to come, this past January, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Tehran and signed 17 different agreements.) The United States has an obvious interest in discouraging Chinese-Iranian security cooperation, and that requires reaching out to Iran.

Iran has a significantly larger population and greater economic potential than its Arab neighbors, and it may eventually be in a position to dominate the Gulf. If it begins to move in this direction, the United States should help the other Gulf states balance against Tehran, calibrating its own efforts and regional military presence to the magnitude of the danger.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Taken together, these steps would allow the United States to markedly reduce its defense spending. Although U.S. forces would remain in Asia, the withdrawals from Europe and the Persian Gulf would free up billions of dollars, as would reductions in counterterrorism spending and an end to the war in Afghanistan and other overseas interventions. The United States would maintain substantial naval and air assets and modest but capable ground forces, and it would stand ready to expand its capabilities should circumstances require. But for the foreseeable future, the U.S. government could spend more money on domestic needs or leave it in taxpayers' pockets.

Offshore balancing is a grand strategy born of confidence in the United States' core traditions and a recognition of its enduring advantages. It exploits the country's providential geographic position and recognizes the powerful incentives other states have to balance against overly powerful or ambitious neighbors. It respects the power of nationalism, does not try to impose American values on foreign societies, and focuses on setting an example that others will want to emulate. As in the past, offshore balancing is not only the strategy that hews closest to U.S. interests; it is also the one that aligns best with Americans' preferences.

### Daalder & Kagan

Daalder and Kagan 16 — Ivo H. Daalder, President of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, former U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, former Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council, former Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution, former Associate Professor in the School of Public Policy and Director of Research at the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, serves on the Advisory Committee of the Secretary of State's Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Robert Kagan, Senior Fellow with the Project on International Order and Strategy in the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution, serves as a Member of the Secretary of State’s Foreign Affairs Policy Board, former Member of the Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State, holds a Ph.D. in American History from American University, 2016 (“The U.S. can’t afford to end its global leadership role,” *The Washington Post*, April 22nd, Available Online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-us-cant-afford-to-end-its-global-leadership-role/2016/04/22/da297be0-062a-11e6-b283-e79d81c63c1b_story.html>, Accessed 07-03-2016)

The economic, political and security strategy that the United States has pursued for more than seven decades, under Democratic and Republican administrations alike, is today widely questioned by large segments of the American public and is under attack by leading political candidates in both parties. Many Americans no longer seem to value the liberal international order that the United States created after World War II and sustained throughout the Cold War and beyond. Or perhaps they take it for granted and have lost sight of the essential role the United States plays in supporting the international environment from which they benefit greatly. The unprecedented prosperity made possible by free and open markets and thriving international trade; the spread of democracy; and the avoidance of major conflict among great powers: All these remarkable accomplishments have depended on sustained U.S. engagement around the world. Yet politicians in both parties dangle before the public the vision of an America freed from the burdens of leadership.

What these politicians don’t say, perhaps because they don’t understand it themselves, is that the price of ending our engagement would far outweigh its costs. The international order created by the United States today faces challenges greater than at any time since the height of the Cold War. Rising authoritarian powers in Asia and Europe threaten to undermine the security structures that have kept the peace since World War II. Russia invaded Ukraine and has seized some of its territory. In East Asia, an increasingly aggressive China seeks to control the sea lanes through which a large share of global commerce flows. In the Middle East, Iran pursues hegemony by supporting Hezbollah and Hamas and the bloody tyranny in Syria. The Islamic State controls more territory than any terrorist group in history, brutally imposing its extreme vision of Islam and striking at targets throughout the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

None of these threats will simply go away. Nor will the United States be spared if the international order collapses, as it did twice in the 20th century. In the 21st century, oceans provide no security. Nor do walls along borders. Nor would cutting off the United States from the international economy by trashing trade agreements and erecting barriers to commerce.

Instead of following the irresponsible counsel of demagogues, we need to restore a bipartisan foreign policy consensus around renewing U.S. global leadership. Despite predictions of a “post-American world,” U.S. capacities remain considerable. The U.S. economy remains the most dynamic in the world. The widely touted “rise of the rest” — the idea that the United States was being overtaken by the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China — has proved to be a myth. The dollar remains the world’s reserve currency, and people across the globe seek U.S. investment and entrepreneurial skills to help their flagging economies. U.S. institutions of higher learning remain the world’s best and attract students from every corner of the globe. The political values that the United States stands for remain potent forces for change. Even at a time of resurgent autocracy, popular demands for greater freedom can be heard in Russia, China, Iran and elsewhere, and those peoples look to the United States for support, both moral and material. And our strategic position remains strong. The United States has more than 50 allies and partners around the world. Russia and China between them have no more than a handful.

The task ahead is to play on these strengths and provide the kind of leadership that many around the world seek and that the American public can support. For the past two years, under the auspices of the World Economic Forum, we have worked with a diverse, bipartisan group of Americans and representatives from other countries to put together the broad outlines of a strategy for renewed U.S. leadership. There is nothing magical about our proposals. The strategies to sustain the present international order are much the same as the strategies that created it. But they need to be adapted and updated to meet new challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

For instance, one prime task today is to strengthen the international economy, from which the American people derive so many benefits. This means passing trade agreements that strengthen ties between the United States and the vast economies of East Asia and Europe. Contrary to what demagogues in both parties claim, ordinary Americans stand to gain significantly from the recently negotiated Trans-Pacific Partnership. According to the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the agreement will increase annual real incomes in the United States by $131 billion. The United States also needs to work to reform existing international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, so that rising economic powers such as China feel a greater stake in them, while also working with new institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to ensure that they reinforce rather than undermine liberal economic norms.

The revolution in energy, which has made the United States one of the world’s leading suppliers, offers another powerful advantage. With the right mix of policies, the United States could help allies in Europe and Asia diversify their sources of supply and thus reduce their vulnerability to Russian manipulation. Nations such as Russia and Iran that rely heavily on hydrocarbon exports would be weakened, as would the OPEC oil cartel. The overall result would be a relative increase in our power and ability to sustain the order.

The world has come to recognize that education, creativity and innovation are key to prosperity, and most see the United States as a leader in these areas. Other nations want access to the American market, American finance and American innovation. Businesspeople around the world seek to build up their own Silicon Valleys and other U.S.-style centers of entrepreneurship. The U.S. government can do a better job of working with the private sector in collaborating with developing countries. And Americans need to be more, not less, welcoming to immigrants. Students studying at our world-class universities, entrepreneurs innovating in our high-tech incubators and immigrants searching for new opportunities for their families strengthen the United States and show the world the opportunities offered by democracy.

Finally, the United States needs to do more to reassure allies that it will be there to back them up if they face aggression. Would-be adversaries need to know that they would do better by integrating themselves into the present international order than by trying to undermine it. Accomplishing this, however, requires ending budget sequestration and increasing spending on defense and on all the other tools of international affairs. This investment would be more than paid for by the global security it would provide.

All these efforts are interrelated, and, indeed, a key task for responsible political leaders will be to show how the pieces fit together: how trade enhances security, how military power undergirds prosperity and how providing access to American education strengthens the forces dedicated to a more open and freer world.

Above all, Americans need to be reminded what is at stake. Many millions around the world have benefited from an international order that has raised standards of living, opened political systems and preserved the general peace. But no nation and no people have benefited more than Americans. And no nation has a greater role to play in preserving this system for future generations.

### Ikenberry

Ikenberry 16 — G. John Ikenberry, Albert G. Milbank Professor of Politics and International Affairs in the Department of Politics and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and Co-Director of the Center for International Security Studies at Princeton University, Global Eminence Scholar at Kyung Hee University (South Korea), former Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, former Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, former Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, 2016 (“American leadership may be in crisis, but the world order is not.,” *The Washington Post*, January 27th, Available Online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2016/01/27/american-leadership-is-in-crisis-but-the-world-order-is-not/>, Accessed 06-22-2016)

The American-led international order is in crisis. Over the past six decades, globe-spanning transformations of states and peoples have overrun long-standing governance arrangements, leading many to wonder what is next.

In the decades after World War II, initially in the shadow of the Cold War, the United States and other liberal democratic states built a distinctive type of order – I call it a “liberal hegemonic order.” It was organized around big ideas and big institutions: open trade, multilateralism, alliances, partnerships, democratic solidarity, human rights and American leadership were all enshrined ideas. To an extraordinary degree, the American-led world order was built around institutions, including the old dinosaurs that still exist today: the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now the World Trade Organization) and the World Bank. A wide variety of regional institutions and far-flung security alliances were also established.

Over the past 60 years, the international landscape has shifted dramatically: the Cold War came and went; American unipolar power has risen and declined; and today, non-Western developing states are gaining in power and influence. Yet, across these decades, the global system of institutions, alliances and partnerships remains. Indeed, institutionalized cooperation among states – Western and non-Western – has deepened in the past two decades. In the decades since the end of the Cold War a small library of books has been written about the “end of the American world order,” yet the most striking features of the current global order still reflect liberal hegemony at their core.

If this is true, what is in “crisis?” There is a crisis of authority, perhaps, but not of deep principles. Liberal international order is built around open and at least loosely rule-based relations. Openness refers to the ability of states to have access to each other’s societies; the ability to engage in exchange and trade of goods, capital and ideas. Rule-based relations refers to relationships between states that are ordered according to general principles and arrangements, as opposed to those built around regional blocs, spheres of influence or imperial zones.

Looked at this way, the “crisis” of the American-led world order is a crisis of success. Over the past 60 years, this order has facilitated positive transformation. The world economy was opened up and golden years of growth and development were ushered in. The project of European Union was launched. Germany and Japan were brought into the liberal democratic world, becoming leading partners in managing the world economy. Countries in Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America and East Asia made democratic transitions and joined the global trading system. More recently, countries such as Brazil, India and China have experienced their most successful decades of economic growth and social advancement.

Today’s struggle is about voice. It is about who sits at the table, how to reorganize the platforms of authority and what should be the new political hierarchy of states. The struggle is playing out within regions and in global institutions. China and other rising non-Western states are seeking a greater voice in existing multilateral institutions while simultaneously working to establish new development-oriented ones. The various old and new institutions are in contest, but the struggle is not about rival models of modernity or even revising the ideologies of order.

There are a number of reasons to say the liberal international order still has a future. First, it is much more formidable than those of the past; it is easier to join and harder to overturn. It is no longer just an “American order,” but a broader system of relations, built on deeply rooted organizing principles and political foundations, including an array of institutions that manifest shared forms of leadership. China, India and other rising states have reaped massive economic gains from their participation within this system, showing that the order is able to accommodate a variety of ideologies. Together these features give the modern international system unusual capacities for adaptation, expansion, integration and evolution.

Second, liberal internationalism is not a Western idea, but rather one with global appeal. Rising nations in the global South and East are as advantaged by an open and loosely rule-based system as older Western states. Openness creates opportunities for trade, capital and technology exchange, and knowledge transfer. Multilateral rules create tools for states to operate on more equal footing at the global level and provide protections for rising states as much as they do for declining Western powers.

These struggles and trade-offs do not fundamentally divide the East and the West. And meanwhile, a multitude of states — including what might be called the great “middle class” — Mexico, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, Australia, Brazil and others — are rising up and seeking a role in this evolving system. These nations are pursuing the role of stakeholder: pushing for more multilateralism, influencing world politics through agenda-setting, bridge-building and coalition diplomacy. Liberal internationalism is still a way of organizing the world. It is not a cultural, civilizational or hegemonic artifact.

When looking at the current “crisis” of the American-led liberal international order, it is important to take the long view. While great problems beset the global system, liberal internationalism remains the only game in town. There are no grand ideological alternatives to liberal international order. Neither China nor Russia has a model that the rest of the world finds appealing, and they are in fact deeply entangled in the global order, reliant on an open world economy and permanent seats at the U.N. Security Council.

The ongoing global power transition and cascade of new transnational problems — global warming, pandemics, WMD proliferation, failed states — are putting pressure on existing global rules and institutions. But the “solution” to these issues will require more rather than less liberal internationalism. If the world is going to muddle through, it will need to muddle through together.

### Kagan

Kagan 12 — Robert Kagan, Senior Fellow with the Project on International Order and Strategy in the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution, serves as a Member of the Secretary of State’s Foreign Affairs Policy Board, former Member of the Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State, holds a Ph.D. in American History from American University, 2012 (“Why the World Needs America,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 11th, Available Online at http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203646004577213262856669448, Accessed 07-04-2016)

History shows that world orders, including our own, are transient. They rise and fall, and the institutions they erect, the beliefs and "norms" that guide them, the economic systems they support--they rise and fall, too. The downfall of the Roman Empire brought an end not just to Roman rule but to Roman government and law and to an entire economic system stretching from Northern Europe to North Africa. Culture, the arts, even progress in science and technology, were set back for centuries.

Modern history has followed a similar pattern. After the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century, British control of the seas and the balance of great powers on the European continent provided relative security and stability. Prosperity grew, personal freedoms expanded, and the world was knit more closely together by revolutions in commerce and communication.

With the outbreak of World War I, the age of settled peace and advancing liberalism--of European civilization approaching its pinnacle--collapsed into an age of hyper-nationalism, despotism and economic calamity. The once-promising spread of democracy and liberalism halted and then reversed course, leaving a handful of outnumbered and besieged democracies living nervously in the shadow of fascist and totalitarian neighbors. The collapse of the British and European orders in the 20th century did not produce a new dark age--though if Nazi Germany and imperial Japan had prevailed, it might have--but the horrific conflict that it produced was, in its own way, just as devastating.

Would the end of the present American-dominated order have less dire consequences? A surprising number of American intellectuals, politicians and policy makers greet the prospect with equanimity. There is a general sense that the end of the era of American pre-eminence, if and when it comes, need not mean the end of the present international order, with its widespread freedom, unprecedented global prosperity (even amid the current economic crisis) and absence of war among the great powers.

American power may diminish, the political scientist G. John Ikenberry argues, but "the underlying foundations of the liberal international order will survive and thrive." The commentator Fareed Zakaria believes that even as the balance shifts against the U.S., rising powers like China "will continue to live within the framework of the current international system." And there are elements across the political spectrum--Republicans who call for retrenchment, Democrats who put their faith in international law and institutions--who don't imagine that a "post-American world" would look very different from the American world.

If all of this sounds too good to be true, it is. The present world order was largely shaped by American power and reflects American interests and preferences. If the balance of power shifts in the direction of other nations, the world order will change to suit their interests and preferences. Nor can we assume that all the great powers in a post-American world would agree on the benefits of preserving the present order, or have the capacity to preserve it, even if they wanted to.

Take the issue of democracy. For several decades, the balance of power in the world has favored democratic governments. In a genuinely post-American world, the balance would shift toward the great-power autocracies. Both Beijing and Moscow already protect dictators like Syria's Bashar al-Assad. If they gain greater relative influence in the future, we will see fewer democratic transitions and more autocrats hanging on to power. The balance in a new, multipolar world might be more favorable to democracy if some of the rising democracies--Brazil, India, Turkey, South Africa--picked up the slack from a declining U.S. Yet not all of them have the desire or the capacity to do it.

What about the economic order of free markets and free trade? People assume that China and other rising powers that have benefited so much from the present system would have a stake in preserving it. They wouldn't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Unfortunately, they might not be able to help themselves. The creation and survival of a liberal economic order has depended, historically, on great powers that are both willing and able to support open trade and free markets, often with naval power. If a declining America is unable to maintain its long-standing hegemony on the high seas, would other nations take on the burdens and the expense of sustaining navies to fill in the gaps?

Even if they did, would this produce an open global commons--or rising tension? China and India are building bigger navies, but the result so far has been greater competition, not greater security. As Mohan Malik has noted in this newspaper, their "maritime rivalry could spill into the open in a decade or two," when India deploys an aircraft carrier in the Pacific Ocean and China deploys one in the Indian Ocean. The move from American-dominated oceans to collective policing by several great powers could be a recipe for competition and conflict rather than for a liberal economic order.

And do the Chinese really value an open economic system? The Chinese economy soon may become the largest in the world, but it will be far from the richest. Its size is a product of the country's enormous population, but in per capita terms, China remains relatively poor. The U.S., Germany and Japan have a per capita GDP of over $40,000. China's is a little over $4,000, putting it at the same level as Angola, Algeria and Belize. Even if optimistic forecasts are correct, China's per capita GDP by 2030 would still only be half that of the U.S., putting it roughly where Slovenia and Greece are today.

As Arvind Subramanian and other economists have pointed out, this will make for a historically unique situation. In the past, the largest and most dominant economies in the world have also been the richest. Nations whose peoples are such obvious winners in a relatively unfettered economic system have less temptation to pursue protectionist measures and have more of an incentive to keep the system open.

China's leaders, presiding over a poorer and still developing country, may prove less willing to open their economy. They have already begun closing some sectors to foreign competition and are likely to close others in the future. Even optimists like Mr. Subramanian believe that the liberal economic order will require "some insurance" against a scenario in which "China exercises its dominance by either reversing its previous policies or failing to open areas of the economy that are now highly protected." American economic dominance has been welcomed by much of the world because, like the mobster Hyman Roth in "The Godfather," the U.S. has always made money for its partners. Chinese economic dominance may get a different reception.

Another problem is that China's form of capitalism is heavily dominated by the state, with the ultimate goal of preserving the rule of the Communist Party. Unlike the eras of British and American pre-eminence, when the leading economic powers were dominated largely by private individuals or companies, China's system is more like the mercantilist arrangements of previous centuries. The government amasses wealth in order to secure its continued rule and to pay for armies and navies to compete with other great powers.

Although the Chinese have been beneficiaries of an open international economic order, they could end up undermining it simply because, as an autocratic society, their priority is to preserve the state's control of wealth and the power that it brings. They might kill the goose that lays the golden eggs because they can't figure out how to keep both it and themselves alive.

Finally, what about the long peace that has held among the great powers for the better part of six decades? Would it survive in a post-American world?

Most commentators who welcome this scenario imagine that American predominance would be replaced by some kind of multipolar harmony. But multipolar systems have historically been neither particularly stable nor particularly peaceful. Rough parity among powerful nations is a source of uncertainty that leads to miscalculation. Conflicts erupt as a result of fluctuations in the delicate power equation.

War among the great powers was a common, if not constant, occurrence in the long periods of multipolarity from the 16th to the 18th centuries, culminating in the series of enormously destructive Europe-wide wars that followed the French Revolution and ended with Napoleon's defeat in 1815.

The 19th century was notable for two stretches of great-power peace of roughly four decades each, punctuated by major conflicts. The Crimean War (1853-1856) was a mini-world war involving well over a million Russian, French, British and Turkish troops, as well as forces from nine other nations; it produced almost a half-million dead combatants and many more wounded. In the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), the two nations together fielded close to two million troops, of whom nearly a half-million were killed or wounded.

The peace that followed these conflicts was characterized by increasing tension and competition, numerous war scares and massive increases in armaments on both land and sea. Its climax was World War I, the most destructive and deadly conflict that mankind had known up to that point. As the political scientist Robert W. Tucker has observed, "Such stability and moderation as the balance brought rested ultimately on the threat or use of force. War remained the essential means for maintaining the balance of power."

There is little reason to believe that a return to multipolarity in the 21st century would bring greater peace and stability than it has in the past. The era of American predominance has shown that there is no better recipe for great-power peace than certainty about who holds the upper hand.

President Bill Clinton left office believing that the key task for America was to "create the world we would like to live in when we are no longer the world's only superpower," to prepare for "a time when we would have to share the stage." It is an eminently sensible-sounding proposal. But can it be done? For particularly in matters of security, the rules and institutions of international order rarely survive the decline of the nations that erected them. They are like scaffolding around a building: They don't hold the building up; the building holds them up.

Many foreign-policy experts see the present international order as the inevitable result of human progress, a combination of advancing science and technology, an increasingly global economy, strengthening international institutions, evolving "norms" of international behavior and the gradual but inevitable triumph of liberal democracy over other forms of government--forces of change that transcend the actions of men and nations.

Americans certainly like to believe that our preferred order survives because it is right and just--not only for us but for everyone. We assume that the triumph of democracy is the triumph of a better idea, and the victory of market capitalism is the victory of a better system, and that both are irreversible. That is why Francis Fukuyama's thesis about "the end of history" was so attractive at the end of the Cold War and retains its appeal even now, after it has been discredited by events. The idea of inevitable evolution means that there is no requirement to impose a decent order. It will merely happen.

But international order is not an evolution; it is an imposition. It is the domination of one vision over others--in America's case, the domination of free-market and democratic principles, together with an international system that supports them. The present order will last only as long as those who favor it and benefit from it retain the will and capacity to defend it.

There was nothing inevitable about the world that was created after World War II. No divine providence or unfolding Hegelian dialectic required the triumph of democracy and capitalism, and there is no guarantee that their success will outlast the powerful nations that have fought for them. Democratic progress and liberal economics have been and can be reversed and undone. The ancient democracies of Greece and the republics of Rome and Venice all fell to more powerful forces or through their own failings. The evolving liberal economic order of Europe collapsed in the 1920s and 1930s. The better idea doesn't have to win just because it is a better idea. It requires great powers to champion it.

If and when American power declines, the institutions and norms that American power has supported will decline, too. Or more likely, if history is a guide, they may collapse altogether as we make a transition to another kind of world order, or to disorder. We may discover then that the U.S. was essential to keeping the present world order together and that the alternative to American power was not peace and harmony but chaos and catastrophe--which is what the world looked like right before the American order came into being.

### Zenko

Zenko 14 — Micah Zenko, Senior Fellow in the Center for Preventive Action at the Council on Foreign Relations, former Research Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, 2014 (“The Myth of the Indispensable Nation,” *Foreign Policy*, November 6th, Available Online at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/06/the-myth-of-the-indispensable-nation/>, Accessed 07-04-2016)

In 1996, political journalist Sidney Blumenthal and foreign policy historian James Chace struggled to come up with a memorable phrase to describe America’s post-Cold War role in the world. "Finally, together, we hit on it: ‘indispensable nation.’ Eureka! I passed it on first to Madeleine Albright," Blumenthal recalled.

In his memoir of the Clinton presidency, The Clinton Wars, Blumenthal elaborated on what the phrase was intended to represent: "Only the United States had the power to guarantee global security: without our presence or support, multilateral endeavors would fail." Albright, then secretary of state, began using the phrase often, and most prominently in February 1998, while defending the policy of coercive diplomacy against Iraq over its limited cooperation with U.N. weapons inspectors when, during an interview on the "Today Show," she said: "If we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us."

Over the last six months, the notion of American indispensability has resurfaced in a big way. U.S. President Barack Obama has emphasized this point repeatedly, and most expansively in May while giving a commencement address to West Point cadets: "When a typhoon hits the Philippines or schoolgirls are kidnapped in Nigeria or masked men occupy a building in Ukraine, it is America that the world looks to for help. So the United States is and remains the one indispensable nation. That has been true for the century past and it will be true for the century to come." Beyond the White House, this assertion has recently been made by Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, Chris Christie, Jeb Bush, Bobby Jindal, Marco Rubio, and Michelle Bachman. This bipartisan group may not agree on much, but they are all proudly "Indispensables."

Like many foreign policy concepts overwhelmingly endorsed by officials and policymakers, this one has little basis in reality. If you consider everything encompassing global affairs — from state-to-state diplomatic relations, to growing cross-border flows of goods, money, people, and data — there are actually very few activities where America’s role is truly indispensable, defined by Webster’s as "absolutely necessary." Nevertheless, the notion clearly has political salience, and has even become something of a mandatory mantra for current and prospective commanders-in-chief. The problem with allowing this classification of America’s global role to persist is that it is so patently false, and thus an illogical basis upon which to base and prescribe U.S. grand strategy.

When Indispensables provide specifics to support their claim, they almost exclusively highlight some use of the U.S. military, whether for humanitarian purposes, coercion, or war fighting. More than any other country, the United States retains a far greater capacity to send troops, disaster response professionals, or bombs virtually anywhere in the world in a short time frame. Today, the U.S. Navy has 102 ships deployed around the world, the Air Force 659 strategic airlifters, 456 air refuelers, and 159 long-range bombers, and the Air Force and Navy combined some 3,407 fighter and attack aircraft. Not to mention the over 300,000 active-duty and reserve Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines deployed to warzones or stationed at America’s 576 active military facilities worldwide.

These unmatched global military capabilities provide U.S. officials with an unmatched spectrum of policy options. However, these can be used for benign and relatively judicious missions, like responding to typhoons, or for profoundly destabilizing and dumb ones, such as invading a distant country to topple its leader with minimal support from other countries and a totally implausible transition strategy. These damaging and tremendously costly missions conveniently tend to be forgotten by Indispensables, yet they are partially a direct result of their crusading mindset.

Indispensables also cite recent U.S. foreign policy activities as evidence to support their hypothesis, but do so in an extremely selective manner. For example, using Obama’s examples, nearly all of the more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls remain in the clutches of Boko Haram, and clandestine Russian security forces continue to operate with impunity in Ukraine. Abuja and Kiev looked to the United States for help, which it provided to the extent that their governments were willing to accept it. But in both countries the help was insufficient to achieve the intended objectives. Again, the reason is, as a senior administration official declared in March: "The American people are not going to war with Russia over Ukraine, full stop." Similarly, even if Michelle Obama herself posts a Twitter photo holding a #BringBackOurGirls sign, U.S. forces will not unilaterally violate Nigerian sovereignty to openly intervene on behalf of the government in a complex civil war to attempt to retrieve them.

Relatedly, Indispensables also omit the vast number of instances where "the world" looks to America for help, and U.S. officials choose to do nothing. Earlier this year, as they have since 2011, mayors in Darfur, South Kordofan’s Nuba Mountains, and Blue Nile, again requested a no-fly-zone to protect civilian populations from the indiscriminate airpower used by the regime in Khartoum. It was denied yet again. Similarly, in March, the Ukrainian defense chief asked the United States to impose a no-fly zone over his country’s 15 nuclear reactors "so that his troops could at least count on some zones of safety." This also did not happen. Finally, Syrian activists and rebels have asked Obama for no-fly zones, buffer zones, arms and training, and financial support for over three years. The Obama administration has largely rebuffed them, while providing arms, training, and salaries that seemingly all the moderate rebel leaders have denigrated for being wholly insufficient against the brutalities of the Assad regime and the Islamic State (IS).

Indispensables also hold an unrealistic faith in the latent power of leadership that flows from suppose it indispensable-ness. During a House hearing in September, Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, declared: "When the United States stands up and demonstrates resolve and demonstrates a direction, the international community generally supports and falls into place behind." Really? This hypothesis would surprise anyone who tracks multilateral fora where U.S. officials state their policy positions and then repeatedly fail to compel other leaders to get in line — see, for example, the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, and the WTO trade talks since the Doha Round opened in 2001.

And if Feierstein is referring only to warfare, then why do so few countries with deployable military assets participate in U.S.-led campaigns in a meaningful way? The United States provided the majority of the actual combat forces and airpower in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, and is doing so again in the air campaign to counter the Islamic State (IS). Most countries that could participate have either declined to do so, or are taking part by providing such limited and constrained capabilities that they are not significantly enhancing the coalition’s capabilities. In each of these military interventions, the United States decried unilateralism, attempted to form a large coalition, and then found itself paying most of the costs, dropping most of the bombs, sacrificing the most soldiers, and losing most of his credibility.

Whether it is multilateral talks or military operations, other governments do not do as Washington demands because, quite simply, it is not in their national interests to do so. Moreover, the United States refuses to employ the political will or coercive leverage to force them to. The point being is that few, if any, substantive and enduring foreign-policy activities can be done unilaterally, and asserting one’s indispensability does nothing to alter others’ interests. It is often stated that countries in the Middle East or East Asia are looking for America "to lead," but they actually want U.S. leadership on their terms, and in support of their own narrow objectives. The moment that leadership conflicts with the visions and objectives those countries hold, they cease or severely limit their partnerships with the United States.

Finally, the Indispensables belief that America’s role in the world is "absolutely necessary" in all areas is simply arrogant. It discounts the tremendous and essential contributions from non-U.S. countries, international non-governmental organizations, and civil society. This includes the 128 countries contributing 104,184 troops and police forces currently deployed in support of sixteen U.N. peacekeeping operations worldwide. The United States provides only 113 troops to U.N. peacekeeping operations, but, importantly, foots 27 percent of the bill and provides logistics support. Or, consider the billions of dollars from the Gates Foundation, Norwegian Refugee Council, Mercy Corps, International Red Cross and Red Crescent, and countless others, which improve the lives of the poorest and most in need. Each of these public health, humanitarian, and development organizations offer the deep pockets and political neutrality that allows them access to areas where the United States simply cannot or will not go.

The reason that the United States is not the indispensable nation is simple: the human and financial costs, the tremendous risks, and degree of political commitment required to do so are thankfully lacking in Washington. Moreover, the structure and dynamics of the international system would reject or resist it, as it does in so many ways that frustrate the United States from achieving its foreign policy objectives. The United States can be truly indispensable in a few discrete domains, such as for military operations, which as pointed out above has proven disastrous recently. But overall there is no indispensable nation now, nor has there been in modern history. Indispensables may feel compelled to repeat this feel-good myth, but nobody should believe them.

## Guided Questions

### Posen

#### According to Posen, what is the foreign policy “big picture” on which Republicans and Democrats generally agree?

#### What “ambitious foreign policy projects” does Posen associate with this foreign policy consensus?

#### Posen argues that the costs of this strategy are high. What alternative strategy does he propose? What does it involve?

#### Posen identifies several inherent advantages possessed by the U.S. What are they? And why does Posen think that the U.S. is not taking proper advantage of them?

#### What does Posen say about the rise of China?

#### Posen describes the emergence of “substate entities.” What does he mean? And why does he think these entities pose a challenge to the consensus U.S. foreign policy strategy?

#### What does Posen mean by “free-riding?” Who does he accuse of free-riding?

#### What other concern does Posen have with the behavior of U.S. allies?

#### What does Posen identify as the three biggest security challenges for the U.S.?

#### What would Posen’s proposed grand strategy mean for U.S. policy toward China?

#### What would Posen’s proposed grand strategy mean for U.S. counter-terrorism policy?

#### What would Posen’s proposed grand strategy mean for U.S. non-proliferation policy?

#### Posen describes what his proposed grand strategy would look like “in practice.” What changes does he think the U.S. should make to its foreign policy?

#### What changes does Posen predict his proposed grand strategy would cause in the international system?

### Brooks, Ikenberry, & Wohlforth

#### What is the consensus grand strategy that BIW argue the U.S. has adopted since WW2? What are its essential characteristics?

#### According to BIW, what might now be causing this consensus to be challenged?

#### How do BIW summarize their opponents’ case for retrenchment?

#### BIW take issue with the “cost savings” argument for retrenchment. What is their argument?

#### BIW take issue of the “balancing” argument for retrenchment. What is their argument?

#### What is the theory of “imperial overstretch?” Why is BIW’s response to it?

#### In contrast to Posen, BIW argue that U.S. alliances contribute to its national security. What is their argument? Why do they disagree with Posen?

#### BIW take issue with the claim that their proposed grand strategy inevitably leads the U.S. to be over-aggressive in the world. What is their argument?

#### According to BIW, what are the major security benefits of their proposed grand strategy? Would do they predict would happen if the U.S. adopted a retrenchment strategy?

#### BIW also argue that there is an economic case for their proposed grand strategy? What economic benefits do they argue it provides the U.S.?

#### What secondary benefits do BIW identify to the maintenance of U.S. security alliances throughout the world?

#### BIW conclude by appealing to the classic “devil we know” frame. What is their argument?

### Mearsheimer & Walt

#### M&W argue that it is unsurprising that Americans are openly questioning the U.S.’s grand strategy. Why?

#### M&W identify several major failings of U.S. grand strategy. What are they?

#### How do M&W summarize the prevailing U.S. grand strategy consensus?

#### What alternative grand strategy do M&W propose that the U.S. adopt?

#### M&W refer to the U.S. as “the luckiest great power in modern history.” What do they mean?

#### M&W distinguish their proposed grand strategy from isolationism. What is the difference?

#### How would M&W’s proposed grand strategy be implemented? “How would it work?”

#### M&W argue that there are several major benefits of their proposed grand strategy. What are they?

#### How do M&W characterize the evolution of U.S. grand strategy over the last 200 years? What factors and events caused it to shift? Why?

#### M&W identify several major arguments advanced by their opponents? What are they — and what is M&W’s response to each one?

#### What is M&W’s position on democracy promotion?

#### M&W distinguish their proposed grand strategy from “selective engagement.” What is the difference? Why do M&W argue that their grand strategy is the better option?

#### What would M&W’s proposed grand strategy mean for U.S. foreign policy toward China?

#### What would M&W’s proposed grand strategy mean for U.S. foreign policy toward Europe?

#### What would M&W’s proposed grand strategy mean for U.S. foreign policy toward the Middle East?

### Daalder & Kagan

#### Like M&W, D&K attempt to explain why the American public is questioning U.S. grand strategy. What different conclusion do they draw about the reason for this uncertainty?

#### How do D&K characterize the contemporary global challenges to the U.S. and its interests?

#### What is D&K’s argument about the relationship between U.S. grand strategy and the liberal international order?

#### In opposition to their opponents, D&K argue that the U.S. is in a better strategic position than many realize. What is their argument?

#### D&K identify a platform of proposals to solidify their preferred grand strategy. What are their proposals? And why do D&K think they are necessary?

#### How does D&K’s position differ from the position of M&W?

### Ikenberry

#### Ikenberry argues that the liberal international order is in crisis. What are the fundamental characteristics of the liberal international order?

#### How does Ikenberry characterize the liberal international order’s crisis? A crisis of what, but not of what?

#### How does Ikenberry explain the crisis’s origins?

#### According to Ikenberry, what is the fundamental contemporary struggle over the liberal international order?

#### Is Ikenberry and optimist or a pessimist about the future of the liberal international order? What is his argument?

### Kagan

#### Kagan argues that history is shaped by the rise and fall of world orders. What does he mean?

#### Kagan takes issue with Ikenberry’s position that “the underlying foundations of the liberal international order will survive and thrive” without the U.S. What is his argument?

#### What is Kagan’s argument about China and its relationship to the liberal international order?

#### Kagan argues that long-term peace depends upon the maintenance of American primacy. How does he support this argument?

#### Many foreign policy experts see the current liberal international order as the inevitable result of human progress. Why does Kagan disagree with this assessment?

#### In Kagan’s view, why is the U.S. indispensable to the stability of the modern world order?

### Zenko

#### What is the origin of the phrase “indispensable nation?” What is it supposed to mean?

#### While the “indispensable nation” trope is a consensus position in the mainstream, Zenko disagrees. What is the thesis and basic outline of his argument?

#### Why does Zenko believe the Indispensables “cook the books” when discussing the costs and benefits of American power?

#### What are some counter-examples provided by Zenko that undermine the Indispensables’ case?

#### Zenko refers the Indispensables as fundamentally arrogant. What does he mean?

### Glossary of Terms to Define

#### Grand Strategy

#### Primacy

#### Deep Engagement

#### Selective Engagement

#### Offshore Balancing

#### Retrenchment

#### Hegemony

#### Balancing/Counter-Balancing

#### Unipolarity

#### Multipolarity

#### Liberal International Order